

Return of the White Admiral *Lagoda camilla* L. (Lep.: Nymphalidae) to north-west Kent

The history of this butterfly in north-west Kent up until 1960 has been summarised by Chalmers-Hunt (1961, *The butterflies and moths of Kent*, Vol. 1), with later records, such as they are, noted by Plant (1987, *The butterflies of the London Area*, LNHS). Broadly speaking, this butterfly was quite common in Kent during the 18th century, but declined during the first half of the 19th century, becoming almost extinct around 1860. There are very few records after this date until the period 1925-1937 when it reappeared in many woodland areas, extending its range from the west, with the number of colonies peaking around 1945.

In north-west Kent it was reported as "common" at Keston and West Wickham (presumably in Spring Park Woods). J.F. Owen (1950), writing in the pages of this journal on the butterflies of Shoreham and Eynsford, declared that the White Admiral ". . . occurred in all woods where honeysuckle abounds and appears to be steadily increasing . . .". This was a singularly unfortunate remark, as the butterfly declined markedly after this date! Very few sightings were made in the area over the next 30 years – Magpie Bottom in 1953, High Elms in 1961 and Spring Park Woods in 1965 were probably vagrants as there was no evidence of the butterfly breeding, despite apparently suitable habitats.

A town centre sighting in Bromley in 1982 was followed in 1983 by a single butterfly reported in Meenfield Woods, near Shoreham on 19 July, with further sightings – each of a single butterfly – in 1984 and 1985. In 1986 there was a sighting in Sparrow Wood, close to the centre of Orpington. A further White Admiral was noted in Sparrow Wood and in Petts Wood (a National Trust woodland also close to Orpington) in 1995. During 1996, there were numerous sightings of the White Admiral in Petts Wood, between 17 July and 4 August by several observers including the National Trust Warden, David Clarke. At the same time several individuals were reported from High Elms woodland, some three miles from Petts Wood.

The woodlands of north-west Kent merge with the suburban sprawl of south-east London and are frequented by many naturalists. Amateur botanists and ornithologists regularly supply butterfly records for these woods and it is highly unlikely that an insect such as *camilla* would escape attention – on the contrary, when sightings are made they are soon drawn to the attention of the local recorders. Without confirmed records of larvae, breeding of the butterfly cannot be claimed, but the number and concentration of records in two woodlands does suggest that this is a possibility.

Although the appearance of this butterfly is predominantly of local interest, it does raise interesting questions as to the source of the colonisation. Perhaps the butterfly has remained over the years at very low

densities? If not, colonists must have faced a daunting journey towards the Orpington area – open farmland, suburban gardens and the M25 motorway having to be negotiated, with individual butterflies needing to fly many miles from the nearest known colonies. The contraction and spread of the range of *camilla* has been well documented, and explanations for the phenomenon, at least on a macro scale, have included climatic shifts combined with changes in the patterns of woodland management. Interesting explanations of changes in range are given by Pollard (1979, *Ecological entomology*, **4**: 61-74) and Dennis (1992, *The ecology of butterflies in Britain*), but whatever the answer, there is considerable pleasure in seeing such an attractive butterfly attempting to establish itself in one's local patch.– PAUL SOKOLOFF, 4 Steep Close, Green Street Green, Orpington, Kent BR6 6DS.

Recurrence of *Callicera aurata* Rossi (= *aenea* Fabr.) (Dip.: Syrphidae) in North Hampshire

On 10 July 1996 a specimen of *Callicera aurata* Rossi flew to m.v. light at Wake's Cottage, Selborne, along with 302 moths of 94 species. During that part of July, significantly enough, the blossom on next-door's Tulip Tree *Liriodendron tulipifera* had been attracting large numbers of Diptera and Hymenoptera. When I reported the first Selborne occurrence in August 1995 (*Ent. Rec.* **108**: 48), I raised the problem that this rare insect was associated with pine, of which there is a local paucity, but recent published work notes that larvae have been found in a water-filled rot-hole in beech (Stubbs, 1996, *British Hoverflies, Second Supplement*). Mr Nigel Wyatt of the Natural History Museum kindly identified both the 1995 and 1996 specimens.
– ALASDAIR ASTON, Wake's Cottage, Selborne, Hampshire GU34 3JH.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: As far as I am aware this is the first record of *Callicera aurata* attracted to a m.v. trap, and it is certainly one of the most interesting records of hoverflies attracted to m.v. light. *C. aurata* is certainly a scarce species, but since the recording scheme became active again in 1991 it has become apparent that it is by no means as rare as was formerly believed. Records of adults suggest that it is by no means confined to woodland, with records from heathland and even a suburban garden; it therefore seems likely that a variety of trees support larvae, but rot holes in beech are almost certainly the main larval habitat. As far as I am aware, there is no association with pine, although a relative *C. rufa* is known principally from Caledonian pine forests. The recording scheme would welcome further records of hoverflies at m.v. light and I would be happy to identify material if accompanied by data comprising date of capture, place of capture and a four figure grid reference.– ROGER MORRIS, 3 Lindale Mount, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 0BH.